

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Minutes
January 25, 2016 by audio-conference
Juneau, AK

Chair James Fields called the meeting to order at noon. Kathleen Yarr arrived at 12:30 p.m. Sue Hull left the meeting at 1:45 p.m. Members and staff recited the Pledge of Allegiance. John Harmon removed the December 10-11, 2015, minutes from the consent agenda. The board adopted the revised agenda. There were no disclosures of conflict of interest.

Public Comment

Joy Lyon, of the Association for the Education of Young Children Southeast chapter, spoke to the proposed department budget for early education, which she said receives half of one percent of state overall funding. She cited the success of the Imagination Library and Parents as Teachers.

Dr. Lisa Parady, executive director of the Alaska Council of School Administrators and Alaska Superintendents Association, noted there has been a working group with the department regarding concerns about the Alaska Measures of Progress assessment and how to approach a comprehensive accountability system. She reviewed results of a survey of superintendents, which showed little support for continuing with the Alaska Measures of Progress.

Lauree Morton, of the Alaska Safe Children's Act Task Force, reviewed meetings of the task force and spoke to the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, referencing funds available for anti-violence efforts.

Kevin Shipley, superintendent of the Kake School District, spoke to educator evaluations and the use of student achievement data. There are many concerns about the reliability of assessments for this purpose. He said Alaska should transition from the Alaska Measures of Progress to another test after this school year.

Sean Dusek, superintendent of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, has concerns with past performance of the vendor for the Alaska Measures of Progress. He hopes the department will explore other assessments. He supports opening comment on the proposed regulation to repeal a pilot of the use of student achievement data in educator evaluations. He also said successful teachers should be evaluated every three years.

Gene Stone, assistant superintendent of instruction at the Mat-Su Borough School District, supported repeal of a pilot of the use of student achievement data in educator evaluations. He spoke to the difficulty of incorporating student data in educator evaluations.

Margaret Bauer, chair of the Alaska Early Childhood Advocacy Group, was concerned about the proposed cut in the state budget of Best Beginnings, a preK program, and Parents as Teachers.

Bob Crumley, superintendent of the Chugach School District, said the current educator evaluation regulations do not achieve their good intentions. Evaluations must provide guidance and support. Educator evaluations are not the original intent of state assessments, he said.

Tammy VanWyhe, director of teaching and learning support for the Copper River School District, read testimony from Superintendent Michael Johnson., who said the Alaska Measures of Progress is all knotted up. It would be better to use other assessments after this spring, he said.

Rep. Lora Reinbold referred to the state law that the department cannot spend money on the Common Core State Standards; however, she said, Alaska's standards are nearly the same. She said the state should not use the Alaska Measures of Progress this spring.

David Nees of the Alaska Policy Forum spoke to the department's operating budget and major maintenance grants, some of which are used to construct schools. He said the budget may not reflect the board's values.

Stephanie Berglund, chief executive officer of Thread, was concerned about the proposed budget cuts to early learning programs and the value of such programs.

Dr. Deena Paramo, superintendent of the Mat-Su Borough School District, compared the Alaska Measures of Progress to the story "The Emperor's New Clothes." She said she was surprised that Commissioner Hanley defended the Alaska Measures of Progress. She wants assessments that give actionable data to adjust instruction immediately, such as from the Measures of Academic Progress.

Stewart McDonald, superintendent of the Kodiak Island Borough School District, said the Alaska Measures of Progress needs short-term fixes before being replaced. School districts need assessments that link to national norms, he said.

Work Session

John Harmon asked Commissioner Hanley how the department will use the Alaska Measures of Progress this spring. The Commissioner said he has asked the U.S. Department of Education for maximum flexibility in assessing students. Alaska is governed by the No Child Left Behind waiver until August 1, 2016. Alaska is required to give a summative assessment this spring. There is no other timely option than the Alaska Measures of Progress. To not give an assessment would put federal funds at risk. Meanwhile, the department and a working group will pursue another route for the future.

Sue Hull asked Commissioner Hanley if it would be worth asking the U.S. Department of Education for flexibility for districts that don't want to give the Alaska Measures of Progress this spring. The Commissioner said the snowstorm in Washington, D.C. prevented him from talking to the U.S. Secretary of Education about that very question.

Kenny Gallahorn agreed with Sue Hull.

Kathleen Yarr said the well has been poisoned with the Alaska Measures of Progress.

Chair Fields said there should be two working groups, one for the Every Student Succeeds Act and one for an Alaska Measures of Progress/assessment solution.

Barbara Thompson said she could see no alternative to giving the Alaska Measures of Progress this spring.

Chair Fields said the department should announce it is using the Alaska Measures of Progress this spring and go out for a request for proposals for future tests. The Commissioner said he should consult with stakeholders first.

Sue Hull asked if the department will vet curricula for new educator training requirements. The Commissioner said a task force will bring recommendations.

Agenda Item 1. Fiscal Year 2017 Department Operating and Capital Budget.

The Commissioner said the department prepares a budget with guidance from the Governor's Office of Budget and Management. It is the Governor's budget.

Heidi Teshner, Director of Administrative Services, reviewed the budget, citing proposed reductions. The board discussed cuts to early learning programs. Ms. Teshner reviewed capital projects.

John Harmon asked about a state prohibition on the department spending state funds on the Common Core. The Commissioner said legislative intent was not to stop Alaska's current standards.

Agenda Item 2. Secondary Education Graduate Certificate program at the University of Alaska Southeast

Dr. Susan McCauley, director of teaching & learning support, said the board is responsible for approving teacher preparation programs in Alaska. The Secondary Education Graduate Certificate program supports the board strategic plan's objective of teacher quality.

Scott Christian, of the University of Alaska Southeast, said the university has had only one path for secondary education, a master's program. The Secondary Education Graduate Certificate program would allow students to bring credits into the program.

Barbara Thompson said the program provides a much-needed option. John Harmon and Chair Fields agreed.

Agenda Item 3A. Educator evaluation systems

Dr. Susan McCauley, director of teaching & learning support, said the department wanted to quickly address requirements related to educator evaluation. In light of probable reconsideration of educator evaluation regulations, it is prudent to consider repealing the pilot requirement, which takes effect this school year. The Commissioner said the proposed repeal fits with the board strategic plan's objective of enhancing local control. Chair Fields said educator evaluation should be on the board's March agenda.

Business Session

Agenda Item 4A. Educator evaluation systems

Barbara Thompson moved and John Harmon seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment for regulation

4 AAC 19.010(k) Purpose and Scope of Evaluations. The motion passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 4B. Minutes of the December 10-11, 2015, meeting

John Harmon corrected two errors in the minutes and moved to approve the corrected minutes. Barbara Thompson seconded the motion. It passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 5. Consent agenda

Barbara Thompson moved and Dr. Keith Hamilton seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of the following: approval of the department's FY2017 operating and capital budgets; approval of the University of Alaska Southeast Secondary Education Graduate Certificate program; and approval of the board's January 2016 report to the legislature. The motion passed 6-0.

Board comments

John Harmon asked if the March meeting would be by teleconference. The Commissioner said it would be face-to-face. The Alaska Measures of Progress situation continues to trouble him. He urged the department to continue to work closely with stakeholders and the superintendents. On the budget, Mr. Harmon said it looks like a good budget but the Commissioner should look at ways for the department to be more efficient without losing effectiveness. He looks forward to the department's recommendations on the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Chair Fields thanked the department for its work on the Alaska Measures of Progress. The board needs to continue its work on the strategic plan, he said.

The board adjourned at 2:17 p.m.